

INTO THE WOODS By Lorraine Viade, Psy.D.



Into the Woods is everything you want in a film adaptation of a Stephen Sondheim musical. Funny, sad, over-the-top, satirical, bold and full of hidden messages, wonderful characters, music and lyrics to bring you into a magical and dangerous world filled with love, hate, loyalty, regret and redemption. Where else but in the woods can you find classic archetypes of princes and princesses, witches and wolves, and happy and unhappy endings? Anyone who was raised on the fairytale genre will love this movie. It may be too cerebral for the very young but definitely meant for the precocious children among us. If you have a child who loves ballet, and who has been to a live musical, take them to see *Into the Woods*.

The casting is great, particularly in the choice of Meryl Streep who tears the role of the wicked witch apart both in persona and in song. Bravo to Ms. Streep who never ceases to amaze. And to the hair and makeup folks, wow! Johnny Depp has a brief role as the lecherous wolf whose attention is lost upon the pre-adolescent red riding hood. Where *Into the Woods* succeeds most is in the emotionally captivating and powerful performances of the leads that really pull us into their world. The children in the roles, while very capable and talented, seemed too young for the lyrics and the dialogue they were given. When red riding hood encounters the wolf, it is a little creepy when you read between the lines as Sondheim meant for you to do.

Into the Woods will satisfy anyone who enjoys great music, acting and storytelling. It is more an adult rendition and cautionary tale for consenting bedtimes. Teenagers would better appreciate the double entendre embedded in the work. So, it serves well as a warning for those who are about to wander away from the safety of home and the shelter of parental love. It also is a warning for those who have made choices only to question those decisions at the wrong place and time. The woods are mysterious and ominous but filled with opportunity and possibility. Those who choose to venture do so with the hope that their wishes will be fulfilled. Sometimes they are. Sometimes they are not. And neither guarantees happiness. And there is the irony of it all. Still, I would rather wander and be smitten even at the risk of being bitten.

I enjoyed *Into the Woods* and for those of you who appreciate the genius of the perfect lyric, you will not be disappointed.

I give *Into the Woods* four witches.

